THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON TUESDAY MORNING, JUNE 10, 1851,

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AT ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH, LOTHBURY.

"Quench not the Spirit."—THESSALONIANS v. 19.

WE need hardly tell you that the Spirit here spoken of is the Holy Ghost—the Third Person in the ever blessed Trinity—whose descent at Pentecost, as the promised guide and comforter of the church, we commemorated last Sunday. We do not think it well to allow this season to pass without specially directing your thoughts to the office of the Holy Ghost in the great scheme of our redemption, and the danger in which we place ourselves by resisting or neglecting his gracious admonitions. We might also enlarge upon the personality and divinity of the Holy Ghost, proving to you from Scripture that the Holy Ghost is no mere holy principle or attribute of God, but a distinct person of the Godhead—eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. But this would open to us too wide a range of discourse, and we shall therefore assume your belief in the great doctrine of the Trinity—of there being three persons in the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and, that of these three persons, "none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another, but the whole three persons are co-eternal together and co-equal."

This being assumed, there are two great topics of discourse with which to engage your attention:—THE OFFICE OF THE HOLY GHOST, and THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST. We cannot well understand the sin, unless we understand the office. You will at once see that the "quenching of the Spirit," of which St. Paul speaks in our text, must be something of the same kind with that sin against the Holy Ghost, of which Christ hath awfully declared—that he who committeth it hath never forgiveness, "neither in this world, nor in that which is to come." The man who has "quenched the Spirit" must altogether have banished from himself those quickening, renovating influences, through which alone sinners can be brought to repentance, and to the doing "works meet for repentance." In what position is he, if not in that of one who is actually unpardonable? unpardonable, because persisting in the puttting from him the alone means of pardon. We will not, however, anticipate our subject. We shall certainly have to speak to you on the unpardonable sin in speaking to you of "quenching the Spirit;" but we shall allow the subject to open gradually before us, taking as our topics of discourse what it is that God's Spirit does for us, and what we are earnestly warned not to do to God's Spirit. In other words, considering, in the first place, what the office is which the Holy Ghost performs in the work of our redemption, and, in the second place, what that sin is which the apostle intends when he entreats of his converts that they "quench not the Spirit."

Now, we must begin by reminding you, that whatever the natural amiableness of character, the sweetness of disposition, and the uprightness of conduct, there is still enmity in the heart against God; "it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." We must set no limits, and allow no exception to the truth—that men are born in sin, and shapen in iniquity, and that all require a moral renovation, which it is far beyond their own power to effect. "Old things must pass away, and all things

must become new;" the bias towards evil must be removed, the heart changed, the affections withdrawn from what is earthly, and fixed on what is heavenly, ere the sacrifice of Christ can be made available to our salvation; and here commences the great work of the Spirit of God. We profess not to explain his operations. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." But certain it is that, by secret suggestion, by powerful influence, which interferes not with the freedom of choice, but impels towards God, and wars against evil; by assistance in forming righteous resolutions, and yet more in carrying those resolutions into effect, the Holy Ghost produces so great a change on the sinner, that he may be described as quite "a new man in Christ." We are taught that we cannot excite within us any pure desire, that we cannot offer an acceptable prayer, that the wondrous things of God's law are not discernible by us, except through the operations of the Third Person in the Trinity. It is the Spirit by which we are strengthened in the inner man; it is the Spirit which helpeth our infirmities; it is the Spirit by which we are set free from the law of sin and death. Having been adopted, through the Spirit, into the family of God, we are also led by that Spirit; so that we go from strength to strength, from one degree of knowledge to another, from one degree of love to another; and thus we are gradually made "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." In every hour of temptation the Spirit is at hand, providing that we shall not "be tempted above that we are able to bear," and ministering those succours through which we may overcome the devil. In every season of affliction and distress, we feel comfort, in proportion as we pray earnestly, with David, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit." In every endeavour to acquire conformity to the image of Christ, we succeed in the degree that we allow full scope to the operations of the Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth;" and, again, St. Paul assigns, as this fruit, "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." And there are yet higher things of this class, which it is the office of the Spirit to effect and bestow. We find this Spirit described as that by which we are "sealed unto the day of redemption;" and as the "earnest of our inheritance," until the redemption of the purchased possession. We learn, from such descriptions, that it is the province and prerogative of the Spirit to impart to us anticipations of heaven; the foretaste of those joys which are promised to all who continue faithful to the end. Whenever, therefore, we are enabled to soar above what is earthly and perishable, and realize, in however faint a degree, the glory and gladness of the invisible world, it is the Spirit to which we stand indebted for emancipation from bondage, and admission to the joys which are in God's presence. The man who can imitate his Master, Christ, and, "for the joy that is set before him, endure the cross, despising the shame," is sustained all the while by the Spirit, who throws open the everlasting doors, and allows him a glimpse of the bright things which are in store for the righteous. The man who "passes through the valley of the shadow of death," daunted not by the terrors of the scene, but animated by the hope which is full of immortality—it is the Spirit, by whose succours he is upheld in the hour of tribulation; it is the Spirit bringing him an earnest of what "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard;" and thus causing him to feel, that if "the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, he has a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Hence, while it is Christ who hath purchased heaven for us, and reared those "many mansions" which are to afford an everlasting home to the faithful of every age and every country, it is the Spirit which gives a present substance to what lies beyond the grave, so that we can lay hold of it as a reality, and use it as a strengthening thing in every conflict with evil. The Son placed us, by his obedience and death, in such a position that it might be consistent with the honour of God to extend to us pardon and acceptance, provided only that there be repentance and faith, the forsaking of sin, and a following after holiness; but we were utterly with-

out the power to perform the condition, and therefore, though redeemed, we must have perished if left to our own strength in appropriating redemption. And here the Spirit takes up the mighty achievement, and applies to the individual case what was wrought out by Christ for the whole of this creation. It rebuilds the fallen and desecrated temple, and having converted it once more into the sanctuary of the living God, ministers continually at the shrine, prompting the offering of acceptable prayer, and making the strains of fervent praise to light up this temple with the hopes of immortality, pouring into its inmost recesses so much of the lustre of the invisible world, that every lurking abomination is successively disclosed; adorning its every chamber with such delineations of the promised inheritance, as to throw into the shade the richest prospects which earth can present. The temple, thus reared and thus dedicated, must indeed be taken down—for the appointment is that man shall be dissolved, that the soul shall ascend to God, and the body return to the dust—but the work is not abandoned, though, for a while, it may seem suspended. "If," as saith St. Paul, "the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you,"—the Spirit, then, shall re-construct the sanctuary which death hath demolished. The Spirit shall be an agent in the resurrection of the body, in the wondrous transformation of the mortal into the immortal, and of the corruptible into the incorruptible, and then shall his office be fulfilled, and nothing remain unperformed in the economy of redemption. Is it not a great office? Is it not a magnificent part? We again say, that inconceivably vast as are the benefits of which the Son is the Author, they cannot surpass, and must not be preferred, to the agency of the Spirit; and therefore do we bow before the Spirit as we bow before the Son, declaring that he is proved Divine by the things which he has done for us, and for our salvation. Yes, we laud and magnify the Son (and, oh! had he not been God, how could he have stood between ourselves and destruction?), and we laud and magnify the Spirit, avowing that were he not a Being with all the prerogatives of Deity, he could not turn again the ruined and depraved into a temple of the Lord God Almighty; and so august does this Spirit appear,—so awfully great are the benefits which he confers, that we almost expect to hear of some terrible doom as awaiting those who alienate him from them;—we scarcely feel surprised when told of a sin that "shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come," and find such sin identified with what is spoken of in our text, where we are exhorted and warned that we "quench not the Spirit."

And now we are brought to the considering more distinctly what the sin is to which the apostle refers—what it is to "quench the Spirit." You will observe that all along we have been referring to the sin of which our Lord speaks in terms which have so often caused anxiety and terror to the timid Christian. As, where he says, "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him." It is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost which is thus pronounced actually unpardonable, and this must evidently be the worst and foulest thing which we can do against the Spirit. And we suppose this to be the same thing as "quenching the Spirit," for this can only describe the last stage of sin against the Spirit, being far beyond, being in fact the completion of, what is elsewhere described as *grieving the Spirit*, and *resisting the Spirit*. And we may gather from the statements which have been advanced as to the office of the Holy Ghost, that this Divine person may be driven from man's breast; that however long he may bear, and however earnestly he may plead, he may pass, so far as the individual is concerned, from the being *grieved* to the being "*quenched*," from the *being opposed* to the *making no further effort*. We say all this might be gathered from what has been advanced; for, since we have described the spiritual work as progressive, commencing with what seems an inconsiderable, though perfected in a magnificent result, it is natural to suppose that the agency may be withstood at

different stages, and even so resisted as to be at last "quenched." And scripture is quite in accordance with this supposition; for it uses the terms—grieving, resisting, quenching, blaspheming, which appear to mark various degrees of opposition to God's Spirit. It seems to us fair to conclude, then, that these different expressions mark different stages in guilt—each refers to what is called a sin against the Holy Ghost. The man who grieves the Spirit, and the man who resists the Spirit, must both be considered as sinning against the Spirit, though it is not until, from grieving and resisting, they proceed to quenching and blaspheming, that they are accounted to have committed the unpardonable sin. We are inclined to believe that much misconception in regard of the unpardonable sin has arisen from considering it as some one desperate misdoing, in place of the consummation, or last stage, of a long course of action. It is our firm persuasion that there is not one in this assembly who has not, at one time or another, made advances towards committing the unpardonable sin, as it is our firm persuasion that there is not one who has never grieved the Spirit, and never resisted the Spirit. If sin against the Holy Ghost were mentioned nowhere but in those awful passages which declare it incapable of forgiveness, we might be justified in regarding it as some most atrocious fault, confined perhaps to a particular age, or committed only in a particular country. But when we find throughout scripture an explicit reference to the sin against the Holy Ghost—for surely he sins against the Spirit who vexes, provokes, grieves, or resists him (and all these are usual expressions)—it seems right to conclude that the unpardonable sin is not so much a sin by itself as the highest degree of sin which we are all prone to commit. I sin against the Spirit whenever I grieve him by resisting one of his motions or suggestions. If I persist in my opposition, I go on sinning against the Spirit; and it is altogether possible that I may at last reach the topmost pitch of enormity, "quench the Spirit," and blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, and thus exclude myself from the benefit of Christ's propitiation. It is under this point of view, so far as we can judge, that the unpardonable sin is to be regarded, whether committed by the Jews, or by ourselves. What was it with the Jews? They rejected the evidence furnished by the miracles of Christ, and declared him a deceiver; and thus they blasphemed against the Son. But this might be forgiven. The crowning evidence was not yet vouchsafed, and would not be until the Holy Ghost descended and wrought miracles by the hands of the apostles, publishing the fact of the resurrection. Let them, however, go on opposing, and at length ascribe the miracles of the Spirit, as they had already done those of the Son, to the power of the devil, and they would be given over to utter hardness of heart as having resisted the final proof, and would therefore perish, as sinners who had sinned beyond the reach of forgiveness. Such was the unpardonable sin which the Jews committed; it was but the last stage in a course of wickedness; and it may be just the same with ourselves. The man grieves the Spirit who is slow in obeying his suggestions, who wilfully exposes himself to temptation, who cherishes indulgencies which he well knows are inconsistent with the health of his soul, and who is better pleased when he can excuse a fault than when he can avoid it. Thus, we say, you may grieve the Spirit in a trifling thing; and as there is an ever increasing facility of resistance, you may pass on almost imperceptibly from this grieving of the Spirit to a fuller and more open resistance. The man who has succeeded in overcoming conscience, and who appears undisturbed by any inward remonstrance as he presses forth in the path of desperate misdoing, has not grown thus obdurate at once; on the contrary, he must have passed through many stages of hardness ere he arrived at thorough insensibility. We do not pretend to trace the successive steps in this sin against the Spirit; we only insist on what we count an incontrovertible truth, namely, that this sin, at its outset, in the form perhaps of hesitating compliance and reluctant submission, may advance, without any abrupt or violent transition, to the utmost hardihood and resistance, till at last, as though the Spirit were wearied out, the man seems abandoned to his own devices; and conscience, unless occasionally starting into wild and short paroxysms,

slumbers on in an iron torpor, and disturbs him not as he multiplies transgressions. And we think that those who have mixed much with the world, who have accustomed themselves to take what may be called a moral view of what passes in their neighbourhood, must have observed cases of growing indifference, leading to confirmed and strengthened opposition to the suggestions of righteousness. We are sure that if you could analyse the history of men who have grown gray in iniquity, who, with one foot in the grave, are as busy as ever in the amassing of property, and who, haunted by the the memory of pleasures which they can no longer enjoy, assume the air of the gay and debauched, and who, moreover, appear quite deadened to moral attack, so that there is no working upon them by the decrepitude of old age, and nothing startling in the solitariness of having outlived every companion, and nothing piercing in the chime of the funeral knell—if, we say, you could analyse the history of these men, we are persuaded you would find that they began with just quieting conscience by a promise or excuse, with resisting the inward admonition, in little and apparently trifling things; and thus they gradually took off, as it were, the edge of the weapon, and then they could resist in great things with as much facility as they had before done in little, till at last no effort was required, and they could sin as matter of course; and they are gliding into eternity with a quenched and crushed conscience, though even now there may be moments when that rejected principle, breaking from sleep into delirium, shakes over the soul the scourge of an avenging fury. But, alas! it is only the spectre of conscience—a fleeting thing, as it were a dream or a ghost story. It is the men who have thus succeeded in making themselves inaccessible to alarm, so that they can go on committing the part of suicide without being disquieted; it is these, we affirm, who have well nigh reached the last stage of sin against the Spirit. They have so provoked that Spirit, by continued and increasing opposition, that it has ceased to strive with them; and what does this amount to, but to having "quenched the Spirit?" And is not therefore the likelihood most fearful that they will be given over to final impenitence? If so, what follows but that, having "quenched the Spirit," they have done that frightful thing of which the Lord Jesus hath said, "it shall never be forgiven, neither in this world nor in that which is to come."

And yet you cannot but observe that we have been here speaking of sin against the Holy Ghost, and showing you that there is a stage of that sin at which man seems excluded from all hope of forgiveness. But, perhaps, it is not even this stage—the stage of final obduracy and impenitence—which is intended by our Lord in his awful expressions. You constantly hear men speak of sinning against the Holy Ghost as an unpardonable thing; but what Christ speaks of is "blasphemy" against the Holy Ghost. Surely these ought not to be confounded! All blasphemy is sin, but all sin is not blasphemy. Blasphemy is a sin of the tongue—exclusively of the tongue; and no man can be guilty of blasphemy unless he use reviling, insulting, impious language. If you examine carefully the several accounts of the three evangelists, you will observe it was evil speaking which called forth Christ's rebuke. It was because the scribes said he had an unclean spirit, that they committed what may not be forgiven. All the sins which men commit are capable of being classed under three heads; as being either in thought, in word, or in deed; but blasphemy against the Holy Ghost can only be referred to the second of these. And no person can have a right to confound it with the sin of thought or of deed. Hence we are at a loss to understand, and we say so for the comfort of those who may be harrassed by fears, how any one can be reckoned to have done that which Christ saith shall not be forgiven, if he never literally blaspheme the Holy Ghost. We again say, that if final obduracy and impenitence may be considered the last stage of sin against the Holy Ghost, the man who has arrived at this stage may be considered as having committed the unpardonable sin, forasmuch as, having "quenched the Spirit," he has excluded himself from the fixed means of pardon. A man may have opposed the Spirit for twenty, forty, or sixty years,

and have at last provoked (though we believe it a rare case) that Spirit to forsake him and leave him to himself; but throughout this long period he may never have blasphemed the Spirit; he may never have employed the tongue, the best member which he has, in belying, slandering, or reviling the Holy Ghost, and therefore never have been guilty of that specific enormity upon which Christ pronounced the fearful verdict, "unpardonable." This it was that the Pharisees had done; Christ wrought miracles by the Holy Ghost, and the Pharisees ascribed those miracles to the devil. They could not deny a supernatural agency, but rather than own a Divine interference they chose to assert a diabolical, and thus blasphemed the Holy Ghost by attributing his operations to Satan.

And if you now ask whether this blasphemy against the Holy Ghost may be committed in our own day, we reply undoubtedly that it may. A man may now do precisely what the Pharisees did,—revile Christ, and ascribe his miracles to the devil; or he may deny that there is any such being as the Holy Ghost, and ridicule the doctrine of his personality, and of the Trinity, as a mark of enthusiasm, folly, or light-headedness. And all this, if it come not quite up to the enormity in question, must be considered to approach very near to blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. What we wish to impress upon you is, that it is blasphemy, and nothing else than blasphemy, which Christ marks with utter condemnation. Let, then, sin against the Holy Ghost be traced, if you will, through its various gradations, but the tongue neither revile, nor slander, nor throw out impious and opprobrious words against the Spirit, and that form of sin has not been committed of which Christ Jesus speaks; and no one who cannot distinctly charge himself with this, has a right to be alarmed by statements which have respect to the unpardonable sin. And if it be asked why blasphemy against the Holy Ghost should thus be stigmatised as of all crimes the most atrocious, we reply that it is insulting and opprobrious language in regard of this agent, which marks a flagrant and rare pitch of depravity. We can imagine a man setting God at nought by every action of his life; but we can scarcely imagine him calumniating, traducing, defaming God by his talk. Yet we would not attempt to prove the blasphemy unpardonable by proving its atrociousness, just as though, under the Gospel dispensation, any crime were too atrocious to be pardoned; but he who can blaspheme the Spirit must exclude himself in a most extraordinary degree from those influences by which alone he can be brought to repentance. If it be a possible case that the Spirit may be so resisted as at last to abandon the individual, certainly this must have occurred when an individual can blaspheme the Holy Ghost. Let a man be so desperate in depravity, as, with the Pharisees, to ascribe his works to the devil, and we should be forced to conclude that the Spirit had ceased to strive with that man, and that consequently, as one who had "quenched the Spirit," he must go down impenitent and unpardoned to the grave. In this manner, and in this alone, we reckon the evil of blasphemy incapable of forgiveness. And blasphemy, measureless as may be its guilt, does not overpass the power of the atonement. If a blasphemer were to turn in contrition to the Redeemer, we nothing doubt that he would find that Redeemer mighty to deliver. But we know not how he is to turn. We dare not look for uncovenanted mercies. If he turn, it must be through the operation of the Spirit; but he has reviled the Spirit—he has wearied out this Spirit. The tongue which the Spirit would have clothed with prayer is clothed with blasphemy; and what can we say of such a man but that there is no warrant in Scripture for our expecting that he will be brought within the range of pardon, just because there is none for reckoning that he stands within the possibility of penitence? And how could we marvel, then, if his sin were shown to be practically that of which it was awfully declared—"It shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in that which is to come," forasmuch as it involves what we are warned against by the apostle, when he emphatically exhorts us that we "quench not the Spirit?"

And here it suggests itself that we should speak to you more definitely, in the last

place, upon what that is which makes the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost unpardonable; for many are distressed by fears of having committed this siu, when their fears are an evidence that they have not. We would have you observe most carefully that it cannot be the greatness of the sin which strikes out its perpetrator from pardon. If you would not limit or deny the virtues of Christ's sacrifice, you must hold that the sin cannot be committed which in itself is too great to be pardoned. It were to shake the whole fabric of the atonement to suppose that a man's guilt may exceed the efficacy of the one great propitiation. Find me an offence too great to be pardoned, and you find me an argument with which to undermine the whole Christian system. And yet it is certain that Scripture speaks of an unpardonable sin, so that some kind or degree of offence excludes from forgiveness. Let us see how these statements may be reconciled. Christ Jesus, by his death, made all sin capable of forgiveness, provided the sinner put faith in his sacrifice. Hence there is no sin for which the Gospel does not proffer pardon, if he who have committed it repent and believe in Christ. But if the sin consist in rejection of the Gospel, there has been no provision for this,—this, from the very nature of the case, is not included in what shall be forgiven, because it is the refusal of the alone mode of forgiveness. For, if the Bible be true, there is but one way in which siu can be pardoned, and no sin the pardon of which, if sought in that way, can fail to be obtained. This one way, as you are aware, is by the virtues of Christ's death, appropriated by repentance and faith. But let this one way be rejected; let, that is, the sin consist in putting deliberately from us the alone provided remedy, and of course it is unpardonable; not because too aggravated to be pardoned, but because its very essence is the rejection of the only method of pardon. The disease is incurable, not because too inveterate for a remedy, but because it consists in throwing the remedy away. And thus we believe, that deliberate and determined rejection of the Christian religion, such as was that of the men who, when the last crowning evidence was given, refused to be convinced by the manifestations of the Spirit, is the single sin for which no pardon is provided or promised. Ay, and we believe that even this sin is unpardonable, only through its own nature,—only through its consisting in a rejection of pardon. If we may assert what will sound like contradiction, the very man who has committed the unpardonable sin may yet be pardoned. There is no impossibility against his pardon, for whilst he lives we have no right to pronounce it impossible that he should repent and acknowledge Christ; and if he repent and acknowledge Christ, the whole Bible is our warrant that he will be forgiven, that he will be saved. It is not that there is not virtue in the oblation of the Lamb of God to take away the guiltiness of infidelity, or, what is a vast deal more aggravated, the guiltiness of apostacy: It is only that infidelity and apostacy by their very nature place the deepest of all gulfs between the sinner and the Redeemer, so separating the two that, upon all human calculation, it seems impossible that they should come into union. We know that no man can turn unto Christ except through the influence of the Spirit of God. If, then, a man have so withstood this Divine agent as to provoke the being left to himself; if he have blasphemed and vilified the Spirit so as to have quenched it; we may fairly declare of this man that he has committed the unpardonable sin; and yet not because his sin is too heinous for the provided expiation, but only because it consists in wearying out and alienating that Celestial Being who alone can enable us to appropriate the expiation. We do not pronounce it impossible that this man should be forgiven; not, at least, iu one sense, if it be in another. He is still a living thing—a thing with a heart—a thing with a conscience; the sun yet rises upon him; the earth yet yields him its fruits, the ministrations of the Gospel are yet going forward around him, and therefore we do not pronounce his pardon impossible. We know that a man's sentence is never indelibly written before his death. I must know that the last sun has risen upon an individual, or rather that the pulse is at its last beat, and yet that the heart retains all its obduracy and callous-

ness, ere I can feel in regard of this individual that he has hopelessly departed and that there is no possibility of bringing him within the border line of mercy.

To bring the matter home to those who are disquieted by the fear of having committed the unpardonable sin, observe, we beseech of you, that the sin is unpardonable, not because it cannot be forgiven, but because it cannot be repented of. The man who has committed the sin of which our text speaks, must be a hardened and careless man, without resolve or wish to turn unto God. He must be a man abandoned of God's Spirit. For there may be repentance where there are the strivings of the Spirit; but, if abandoned by God's Spirit, he must be a man given up to final obduracy, and who no longer has any hope of averting the threatenings of God's vengeance. Whereas the timid, disconsolate being, who is agitated by fears of having wrought sin which is unpardonable, is still accessible to repentance, still awake to danger, and therefore he cannot yet have "quenched the Spirit." He is not yet deserted by that Spirit, and, therefore, not yet incapable of repentance. Whatever the enormity of the sin by whose commission he is troubled, it is not, and it cannot be, the sin which is represented as unpardonable. And we have nothing to say to the individual whom we find staggered by what Scripture says as to the unpardonable sin; depressed by the remembrance of some fault, and determined to believe that he has perpetrated blasphemy which is declared incapable of forgiveness—we have nothing to say to him, but that the fear, the grief, the anguish are evidence enough that he is still capable of repentance. Indeed, it is manifest that he cannot be classed with those whose sin is unpardonable, only because their repentance is impossible. We do again and again impress upon you that it is still possible for the soul to receive salvation while it is within reach. I dare not say that there is one within sound of my voice who has committed the unpardonable sin.

I hail your appearance in the house of the Lord as my witness upon this. One cause or another might, indeed, bring into the sanctuary the man with a seared conscience, who had altogether "quenched the Spirit," and who, by successive resistance, had reached the last stage of indifference and obduracy. It is possible! We do not take on ourselves to deny this; but it is not the possibility on which we are bound to reckon. We must compute by appearances. So long as a man makes use of known means of grace, we are justified in considering him still accessible to moral attack. We look upon you all, then, as still striven with by the Spirit, and we entreat you all to take heed how you slight his admonitions. If you would avoid,—the young amongst you, more especially, whose conscience is yet unseared,—if you would avoid taking the first step in a most precipitous path, be cautious, we implore of you, of ever grieving the Spirit, of indulging in any pastimes, of cultivating any acquaintances, of omitting any duties, where you can feel that your conduct may give pain to a most affectionate Guardian. In little things your danger lies. The Spirit is grieved by little things—little indulgences, little omissions—as well as provoked in great; and, alas! having grieved him in little things, we soon come to think great things little; and thus we imperceptibly provoke; and who shall say how we may descend the inclined plane of indifference, of hard-heartedness! "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." "The temple of God!"—Take heed, then, how ye defile this sanctuary! If you indulge in impure thoughts, oh! it is cherishing what God hates in the secrecies of his temple. If you yield to lusts and to unlawful appetites, it is surrendering his temple to his adversaries. If you be neglectful and lukewarm in the pursuit of heavenly things, and in the discharge of spiritual duties, it is suffocating the fire of God on the altars of God; it is casting dust into his censers. Let it be, then, our prayer and our effort that we may cherish the Spirit by which we are sanctified, hearkening to his every suggestion, yielding to his every motion, avoiding, as we would shun the mortal enemy of our peace, whatever may be displeasing unto God.